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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0284  
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 0277  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000302

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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA, DS/IP/AF, DS/ICI/PII, DS/DSS/OSAC  
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK  
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR  
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH  
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON  
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY  
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS  
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS  
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER  
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD  
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART  
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT  
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2017

TAGS: ELAB KDEM NI PGOV PHUM

SUBJECT: UNIONS: ELECTION PROTEST ON THE TABLE BUT NOT IN  
THE WORKS

REF: ABUJA 795

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) Summary: The Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), in conjunction with the Labor and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO) will celebrate the Nigerian Labor Day on May 1 with rallies in Abuja, Lagos and Benin City and with signs protesting the recent elections. As of April 29, Nigerian union leaders had not yet decided upon any further response to the massive irregularities of the April 14 and 21 elections. Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), Trade Union Congress (TUC), and the oil sector unions (PENGASSAN and NUPEENG) told Poloff on April 26 they needed to meet with other civil society groups to determine a course of action. While some union officials have clamored for a national strike, others were hesitant to get the unions enmeshed in political matters. End Summary.

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UNIONS DISCUSS & ALIGN WITH CIVIL SOCIETY;  
TOO EARLY TO STRATEGIZE  
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12. (C) Following the April 25 meeting between civil society and labor unions under the Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE) in Abuja, the Assistant Secretary to the Nigeria Labor

Congress (NLC), Denja Yaqub, told Poloff civil society and unions are still discussing possible reactions to the April elections. During the ACE meeting, civil society representatives called for cancellation of elections. This would require an interim government and should be carefully considered, Yaqub cautioned. While the unions are trying to determine to what extent they will get involved in election protest, the NLC and Trade Union Congress (TUC) would host a "2007 May Day Commemoration" rally in Abuja where 5,000 to 10,000 union members and the Labor and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO) would peacefully protest the elections at Eagle Square, Abuja, Yaqub told Poloff April 30.

¶13. (C) Given the sensitive nature and potential fallout of a nationwide protest, Yaqub wanted to ensure the NLC and other unions harmonize their plans with civil society partners such as the Labor and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO). While Yaqub thought a national strike unlikely, he would not rule it out. If most of the recognized civil society organizations protested, he warned, labor would be forced to join. However, he said civil society and labor have been slow to address the elections because they were stunned by the egregious rigging and irregularities.

¶14. (C) Peter Akpatason, President of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG) told Poloff NUPENG was considering working with other democratic groups but that it was too early to project whether the unions would participate in any organized protests other than the May 1 rallies. However, he said, the GON "only understands extreme action." If the government refuses to or is unable to redress the elections, Akpatason predicted there would be no middle ground. Either Nigerians would surrender to fatigue and resign themselves to the result or, conversely, "take to the caves and creeks." NUPENG would only pursue legitimate means and would coordinate its actions with the NLC, he

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stressed.

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PENGASSAN: CAREFUL APPROACH TO PROTESTING ELECTIONS  
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¶15. (C) Peter Esele, President of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Senior Sector of Nigeria (PENGASSAN) and recently-elected President of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was critical of civil society's recent announcements calling for nationwide election cancellation and strikes. Civil society was "making a lot of noise" without thinking through the consequences of their demands or proposed actions, he complained. He saw no reason to believe the April election results would not be repeated without a complete overhaul of the Nigerian system. Attempts to do this would surely allow Obasanjo the opportunity to install an interim government of his choosing, further perpetuating the problem.

¶16. (C) While Esele would willingly strike for labor-related issues, he was reticent to conduct a strike because of electoral politics. Esele said he would soon meet aggrieved Action Congress (AC) governorship candidate for Edo state and former NLC president, Adams Oshiomole, to discuss ways forward. Esele said he would need to hear incredibly convincing and well planned arguments that striking/protesting was the best option before he would consider involving the TUC or PENGASSAN. (Note: Peter Esele is well educated and has resolved conflicts between PENGASSAN workers and their multinational oil-producing employers. His recent appointment as TUC President may bring energy and vision to this once anemic organization. End Note.)

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Comment  
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¶17. (C) The labor unions understand the delicate position

they face and are studying the possible consequences of their potential actions. Pressure from civil society groups is there but government is also pushing from the other side. Labor will be bargaining with both of its pushy suitors. It remains to be seen whether the labor unions will mobilize or protest the elections beyond the May Day Commemoration. End Comment.

BROWNE